October 23, 1942. He has reported that even though reception was weak on the other side, he could hear Chungking clearly. Another sign of the times was the announcement by Chungking postal circles on May 28, 1943, that direct mail service between Sinkiang Province and India had been inaugurated. According to the published report, "After the loss of Burma, all the mail destined for countries by the overland route was sent to Russia where it was re-directed to its various destinations. The opening of the new service has speeded up mail delivery to foreign lands. Arrangements are being made for the opening of parcel service on this overland route."

The wartime fight against inflation and against serious jarring of living conditions has met with considerable success. It is claimed that Price Control Commissions set up "everywhere" have made the Sinkiang price level the lowest in China. Yet wages, correspondent Ch'en Chi-jung has found, are high. Ch'en, walking by a 1942 Sinkiang road construction project about six miles outside of Tihwa, came across laborers who were receiving $12 Chinese a day. He indicates that skilled workers of the province were currently receiving even more.

Serious wage lags in the case of subordinate government salaried employees have been one of China's serious problems in the inflationary years of her Resistance and Reconstruction. This may have been proving difficult for Sinkiang also since many of her government workers, for instance, still receive little more than $200 Chinese a month. But Sinkiang authorities have been meeting the situation for such workers with reductions of social and public expenses, with compensation in the way of reduced prices on commodities, and with small monthly subsidies in such staples as rice, flour, salt, sugar, matches, and oil.

Reports in October, 1943, of Russian "withdrawal" from Sinkiang, have been coupled with increasingly illuminating accounts of new Chinese migration to the province. This can promise a whole new vista of reconstruction developments in the province, and such developments deserve to be watched with keen interest. One of the most immediately noticeable effects has been the announcement on November 10, 1943, of an "ambitious plan" for the modernization of the Sinkiang capital. "During the past three months," the report states, "thousands

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

202 the telegrams from Misgar in 11–13 days. Hunza men carry the bags on foot or horseback as far as Tashqurghan, Consulate couriers the rest of the distance. Except in early spring, when the mails are sometimes held up for a week or two by snow on the passes and the telegraph line over the Burzil is broken by the same agency, the service is remarkably regular. Accidents do happen, but are fortunately rare; in 1921 a Hunza courier with his mail-bag fell off the path near Ata'abad and was dashed to pieces, and another was lost in the snow on the Mintaka Pass in the spring of 1923. Needless to say, these men are well paid, and the Kashgaris on the Tashqurghan section, who do the double journey by the Gez route once a month all the year round, have in addition comfortable married quarters in the Consulate "village," a coveted privilege.

205 Legation correspondence and other mails from China Proper, on the other hand, came by the Chinese post, which was regular and remarkably speedy, considering the vast distances involved. Letters took two months to reach Kashgar from Peking, and parcels (which came by cart) five to six months. Except for two private couriers whom we maintained for our heavy correspondence with Yarkand, we depended entirely on the Chinese post within the borders of Sinkiang. Our letters reached Keriya, for example, in ten days, though the distance is well over 400 miles, including 150 miles of sandy desert. The service between railhead at Pingtang and Keriya, viâ Kansu, Hami, Maralbashi and Yarkand, some 3,000 miles, is by far the longest courier-borne postal service in the world. Its efficiency is all the more creditable in view of the enormous difficulties with which the Department has to contend. The head of the Postal Department in Sinkiang during our time was an Italian and is always a European official of the Chinese Board of Communications; and the Chinese Postmasters whom we met at Kashgar were all men of up-to-date Western education with a good knowledge of English.

647 "Society" at Kashgar consisted of the Chinese official world, the Swedish Mission, the Russian colony and the
648 British Consulate-General. The Chinese officials of whom we saw most were the Taoyin, usually known by the honorific title of Tao Tai; his Foreign Affairs Secretary, who spoke English; the Magistrates of the Old and New Cities, which are the headquarters of separate districts though only six
648 miles apart; the Commandant of the Old City garrison; the Postmaster (another English-speaker), the Master of the Mint,

549 668 177 443 On November 2, 1952, the Qomul (Hami) branch of the Hsin-hua Book Store established the first "self-service" sales station. In November, 1952, in Urumchi (Tihua), the store organized 116 special individual distributors in the various units of government offices, schools and military forces. At the same time, four more sales stations were established.

[489] [705] To ship the bulky and heavy books to the whole province, the Hsin-hua Book Store utilized the army transportation facilities. With the help of the army, 1,280,000 copies of elementary and middle school textbooks were delivered.

In August, 1952, Hsin-hua Book Store organized a moving supply section to go deep into the nomadic counties Barkul (Cheng-hsi), Ch'ang-chi, Hu-t'u-pi (Ching-hua) together with the Visiting Group of Sinkiang Provincial Government. It also established a [205] mail order department, accepting also orders for books published in other places in the country and the Soviet Union (Sinkiang jih-pao, January 11, 1953).

Distribution of Communist books has been pushed tremendously by the organized force of the Party. The distribution of the Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung in Uighur and Kazakh started with the organization of a distributing committee at every level of the Party organization above the county. Every member of the Party and the Youth League was required to join in the selling of the book, to his friends and acquaintances as well as in the bazaars. Every branch of the committees had a selling quota to meet. Dancing teams, drum teams performed and marched on the streets to promote the sale. Salesmen were carrying books to every door.

With this kind of high-pressured salesmanship, Hsin-hua Book Company sold in three years (1950-1952): 2,491,531 copies of books; 733,348 periodicals; 1,848,555 textbooks; 2,973,762 international editions of books and periodicals (This included Chinese, Uighur, Kazakh, Russian, etc., among which 1,200,000 copies were textbooks.) This is a total of 8,037,196 copies. Broken down by languages, the figures were:

Uighur	4,018,595	or 50%
Chinese	2,813,019	or 35%
Kazakh	482,232	or 6%
Mongolian	160,744	or 2%
Russian, Uzbek, etc.	562,603	or 7%

Compared with the past, these figures are impressive. The impression is modified, however, when the distributed titles are examined. Many of these publications were documents, handbooks, or propaganda pamphlets.

Among these, the periodical The Sinkiang Propagandist was distributed in 782,902 copies in three years. Another best seller was the Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung, translated into Uighur,

3:Cable & French M-5 (1926) 1927 AF13 Northwest China
Sinkiang AI 1

CHAPTER XXXV

FROM DOVE TOWER TO HAMI

361 [366] THE oasis of 'Dove Tower' proved to be somewhat larger than those which we had recently passed. It even boasted a little shop where one could purchase matches, cigarettes, tobacco, small-sized face towels, incense, and the poorest quality of the paper articles required for temple worship. This shop was also the [405] post-office, though it provided neither stamps nor post-cards; it kept, however, a surprisingly good stock of medicinal plants and opium. The few inns which composed the village were built at the foot of a high, overhanging cliff riddled with holes, in which wild doves built their nests. Flocks of these birds were always flying across the face of the cliff, their wings shining in the sunlight as though covered with silver and their feathers with yellow gold. The heat reflected from the cliff was intense, and we were glad to find the inn room to be windowless, and depending entirely for ventilation on a small hole in the roof. This type of room at first sight seems to be devoid of any single element of comfort, for on entering the traveller finds himself in a dark apartment scarcely larger than a cupboard. Apart from a narrow passage, the whole floor space is occupied by a mud *kang*. In place of a ceiling the roof is lined with dried grass, indescribably filthy and coated with a black deposit from the heavy smoke of the smouldering manure, and which grass gradually loosens and hangs down but a few feet from the sleeper's face. A small round hole in the roof, about the size of an ordinary stove-pipe, supplies the ventilation and one ray of daylight, for as there is no window, on closing the

485 [132]

3:Gable & French M-5 (1926) 1927 AF13 Northwest China
Sinkiang AI 1

of which was full of tamarisk mounds. Many of these stood twenty feet high, and here, as everywhere in the desert, each plant was raised on a mound accumulated round its roots, this being the soil blown by the wind from some more fertile region. Among the tamarisks were plants of Saksaul (*Anabasis Ammodendron*), whose contorted stems, grey cracked bark, green plumes of small greyish leaves, and pink fruit differentiated them from the more feathery species. It has been computed that these tamarisk hills may be from 500 to 1000 years old. The trunks of a forest of dead poplars stood beyond, and added a final touch to the desolation of the scene.

Tsikioking—'The Seven Cornered Well'—stands in the sandy basin, and is now a place of some importance, boasting a small Government Official who also controls the post-office. It is here that the roads divide which lead from Hami to Turfan, and Hami to Kucheng. We were following the latter, but the telegraph wire went via Turfan to Urumchi. Great as was our desire to see Turfan—a most interesting locality—we realised that it was scarcely safe to enter such a hot area at midsummer. We were warned that at this season people were dying from heat, and that the inhabitants protected themselves by spending the hours from sunrise to sunset in underground cave dwellings. The Turfan depression descends to two hundred feet below sea-level, and presents conditions most favourable to agriculture but almost insupportable to man. Tsikioking is better supplied with fuel than any of the surrounding oases, and in winter its population is increased by families who move here for those months. The best fuel known in the desert is the root of the tamarisk. It is of dark hard wood which, chopped into small pieces and sun-dried looks like coal, and has a great deal of its burning

3:Cable & French M-5 (1926) 1927 AF13 Northwest China
Sinkiang AI 1

Russia which provides it with manufactured goods, and its own most noted product is sulphur.

The streets of Urumchi present a mass of low, formless, utilitarian buildings, covering a large area. The Governor's Yamen, which occupies a large enclosure, contains spacious courtyards dominated by a high tower, from which the surrounding country can be surveyed. Second in importance to the Government buildings is the new Post Office, constructed with a view to dealing with large quantities of mail material. The postal system is excellently controlled, and for many years the position of Postal Commissioner has been held by a Westerner, who, at the time of our visit, was an Italian. Thanks to energetic organisation, the enforcement of a time limit on the couriers, and the careful division of the road into well-regulated stages, Urumchi is brought within forty-five days of Peking—a truly marvellous accomplishment. The direct postal communication with Europe via Chuguchak, Semipalatinsk, and Omsk was suspended during the war, but is now once more available, by which means letters can reach London in twenty-eight days. There is a wireless installation in daily communication with Kashgar, but this is under the strict supervision of the Governor. The Russo-Asiatic Bank formerly had a branch office here, and a few Western firms have opened agencies through which they now carry on business.

The stream of *emigrés* who left Russia at the time of the Revolution, have had an important bearing on the development of Urumchi, which has resulted in the formation of a Russian quarter. Here the impoverished refugee, the Nogai, and the Sart live side by side, and of recent years the Soviet Government has appointed a Consul General to guard their interests. Permission to erect a statue of Lenin in the Consular grounds has been

3; Cable & French M-5 (1926) 1927 AF13 Northwest China
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This town is known to Russians as Chuguchak, to Chinese as Tacheng, but colloquially it is always called Behya—'The Town of Seagulls'—because these birds, following the course of the Irtish River all the way from Arctic regions, collect here at certain seasons of the year. We had in fact already seen them in the Gobi further south, but could scarcely credit them to be really seagulls until we learnt that it is their habit to follow the great rivers as far as their sources. Geographically and politically the position of Tacheng is an important one, forming as it does the one outlet towards Siberia for all Turkestan. It is a populous, busy city, with important Chinese and Russian quarters. There is a Russian Consul in residence, part of whose duties consists in the issuing of temporary passports to drivers and carters passing to and fro over the border. There are postal and telegraph offices and a military station. The postmaster, Mr. Chang, was very helpful and friendly. He knew something of foreigners' tastes, being a Hankow man, and suggested that 'the ladies might enjoy a drive round the city,' and he therefore sent his Russian carriage and driver to show us the sights. Having completed the *Grand Tour* this man then asked us if we would like to see some more. 'Certainly,' we said, 'show us all there is worth seeing,' whereupon, with a grin, he whipped up his horse, and starting off at a good pace took us exactly over the same ground as before! The smart carriage, with strangers seated in it, attracted some attention on its first round, but when we appeared the second time the shopkeepers themselves came to their doors, exclaiming, 'Here they come again!' while one, making a movement with his hand, indicated that we were on a perpetual circular tour. To 'save face' we therefore drew up before some of the shops, and enquired the price of many of the goods, though we had not the slightest intention